

on that side of the aisle have the opposite position, that somehow to treat a 527 like a political party, and therefore cap contributions like they are to parties, would somehow be a violation of free speech? Is that the position now that the Democratic leader is taking?

Mr. REID. Madam President, every question the distinguished Senator from Kentucky asked indicates how important it is to have a full, complete process here in the Senate about campaign finance. Every question he asks is more complicated than the last. Him asking me how the Democrats stand on this issue is something I cannot answer. These seats have changed back and forth since we took up McCain-Feingold.

I will say this: Having worked as a candidate prior to the passage of McCain-Feingold and after it passed—as far as I am concerned, what happened in 1998, when I had a very difficult race in Nevada with my dear friend, the junior Senator from Nevada, JOHN ENSIGN, we had a tough election, a tough election. But in the little State of Nevada, back in 1998, we did not have many people there. We are approaching 3 million there now. We did not have 2 million then. JOHN ENSIGN spent \$10 million; HARRY REID spent \$10 million. But the vast majority of the money was corporate money. People could give us hundreds of thousands of dollars. Now, that may not have corrupted JOHN ENSIGN or corrupted HARRY REID, but it is a process that does not look good, and it is corrupting, it could corrupt an individual.

Having run in 2004—it was a good election—I went out and raised money, as I did when I first started in this process. I would go to somebody. They would give me whatever the limits were: \$1,000, \$2,000. That limit would be printed, and everyone in the world knew what that person did for an occupation, where they lived, how much money they gave me. I felt so much better in 2004 than I did in 1998 because I did not have to go around asking people for these corporate donations.

I have not talked to my friend, Senator ENSIGN, but I will bet you he agrees with me because I do not think either one of us felt comfortable with those huge corporate contributions that were coming into the State of Nevada. The purpose of it: the Republicans ran vicious ads against me. He had bad ads that were run against him.

I think the process is better. If we are going to change the McCain-Feingold process, let's do it by looking at everything, not just 527s. Let's look at trade associations. Let's look at State parties. Let's look at this PAC situation where we have all these leadership PACs. There are a lot of things we need to look at.

But what the House is doing—disguising campaign finance reform as lobbying and ethics reform—is wrong. We did not do that here. And I think that speaks well of JOHN MCCAIN. He had an amendment prepared. He did

not do it because he knows it would have corrupted McCain-Feingold. I would assume that is why he did not offer it. It would have corrupted the legislation we now have that we call McCain-Feingold, which I think has improved the process. I am glad the Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional.

Now, I know my friend, the distinguished majority whip. He did not like McCain-Feingold. He worked very hard against it. He did a good job. He is a fine lawyer and a good advocate. He lost. Those of us who supported McCain-Feingold won. And if we are going to change it, let's have another fair fight like we had with McCain-Feingold, where my friend from Kentucky can be on one side, I can be on the other. We may even wind up on the same side.

But that is what kind of debate we should have, not what is happening in the House now, disguising it as lobbying and ethics reform, and really it is not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, just one final observation with regard to this discussion in which the Democratic leader and I have been engaged. And I am glad he is still on the Senate floor because I would not want to say this with him not being here. I noticed that he was glad the days of large corporate and individual soft money donations were gone from parties. I wish he would be equally offended by the fact that large donations are still available for the 527s. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

If large contributions—corporate and individual contributions—to parties were outlawed because of the, “corrupting potential” of that, it seems to me entirely inconsistent to argue that they should not be eliminated from 527s.

I think the reason our good friends on the other side of the aisle have had an epiphany about 527s is because they now believe these activities are beneficial to them. So the consistency is something that is hard to find in the course of this debate.

It will be interesting to see what the final House bill includes. To simply allow political parties to spend money in coordination with the candidates wearing their party label, it is hard to conclude it would in any way corrupt the system.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, just one final comment.

I believe that if 527s are doing things that are wrong, maybe we need to take a look at 527s but in conjunction with all the rest of the things that happen in campaign finance. I have no problem with that—but not 527s alone. If we want to look at trade associations and all the other things, I am happy to do that, but let's not just single shot one

of these because there are a lot of other things that need to be looked at at the same time.

The distinguished Senator from Kentucky and I have had longstanding personal discussions off the Senate floor about campaign finance. We have had them on the floor. As I have indicated already, I have the greatest respect for how he feels. He is a real advocate for his position.

I try to do the best I can for mine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I had the good fortune early in my political life to meet and work as an intern for Paul Douglas, a Senator from Illinois from 1948 to 1966. He wrote several books about ethics in government that are still widely quoted. I was fortunate to meet him and then to meet a man who counted him as a mentor, Senator Paul Simon. Both inspired me to do a few more things in my public life than I might otherwise have done.

For instance, Paul Douglas had a rule in his office for staff that they couldn't take anything they couldn't drink. I assume that meant they could have an expensive drink at some local restaurant, but they certainly couldn't take a meal or a gift or anything like that. He had a personal rule that he wouldn't take a gift in his office that was worth more than \$2.50. I can recall some angry constituent who sent Senator Paul Douglas a handmade, tooled leather belt with Paul Douglas' name on it which he returned. I am sure the donor was offended, but that was his rule. He made complete disclosure of his income and net worth, as did Paul Simon. I have tried to follow their example.

We need meaningful ethics reform, but I agree with Senator REID that we also need to have a serious conversation about campaign financing. They are related issues, but they are not the same. The issue we decided to vote on in the Senate on lobbying and ethics reform was timely and important. We know what happened. Mr. Jack Abramoff created a scandal across Washington with the excesses in which he was involved. He has pled guilty on some and is working with the Government, and there may be further indictments and convictions as a result. At least one Member of the House, TOM DELAY of Texas, was indicted and ultimately resigned before his trial. Others in both political parties are under suspicion.

Neither political party has a monopoly on virtue. I know honest and hard-working people on both sides of the aisle. We should do our level best to restore the confidence of America in the process and the people who participate in it.

The effort now by some House Republicans to inject campaign finance reform into this is a poison pill. They know if they can complicate the issue, ultimately nothing will happen. We would like to see our conference strictly set on lobbying and ethics reform.